

**GIVE AND TAKE: A
REVOLUTIONARY
APPROACH TO SUCCESS BY
ADAM GRANT**

Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success by Adam Grant is an interesting perspective on the three different types of people in life; givers, takers and matchers. By identifying and assessing the different characteristics of each, Grant provides an interesting insight onto who is actually more successful in life based on their approach. With real-life examples Grant offers plenty of useful advice on how to navigate situations and get the most out of them while also contributing to others.

GOOD RETURNS

According to conventional wisdom, highly successful people have three things in common: motivation, ability, and opportunity. If we want to succeed, we need a combination of hard work, talent, and luck.

There is a fourth ingredient, one that's critical but often neglected: success depends heavily on how we approach our interactions with other people. Every time we interact with another person at work, we have a choice to make: do we try to claim as much value as we can, or contribute value without worrying about what we receive in return?

Givers, takers and matchers

Giving, taking, and matching are three fundamental styles of social interaction, but the lines between them aren't hard and fast.

Takers have a distinctive signature: they like to get more than they give. They tilt reciprocity in their own favor, putting their own interests ahead of others' needs. Takers believe that the world is a competitive, dog-eat-dog place.

In the workplace, givers are a relatively rare breed. They tilt reciprocity in the other direction, preferring to give more than they get. Givers strive to be generous in sharing time, energy, knowledge, skills, ideas, and connections with other people who can benefit from them.

But in the workplace, give and take becomes more complicated. Professionally, few of us act purely like givers or takers, adopting a third style instead. We become matchers, striving to preserve an equal balance of giving and getting. Matchers operate on the principle of fairness: when they help others, they protect themselves by seeking reciprocity.

HOW GIVERS, TAKERS AND MATCHERS BUILD NETWORKS

For centuries, we have recognized the importance of networking. Networks come with three major advantages: private information, diverse skills, and power. By developing a strong network, people can gain invaluable access to knowledge, expertise, and influence.

Spotting the taker in givers clothes

When we see a taker coming, we protect ourselves by closing the door to our networks, withholding our trust and help. To avoid getting shut out, many takers become good fakers, acting generously so that they can waltz into our networks disguised as givers or matchers.

When takers deal with powerful people, they become convincing fakers. Takers want to be admired by influential superiors, so they go out of their way to charm and flatter.

Takers may rise by kissing up, but they often fall by kicking down. As takers gain power, they pay less attention to how they're perceived by those below and next to them. Over time, treating peers and subordinates poorly jeopardizes their relationships and reputations. After all, most people are matchers: their core values emphasize fairness, equality, and reciprocity. When takers violate these principles, matchers in their networks believe in an eye for an eye, so they want to see justice served.

How to recognise a taker

First, when we have access to reputational information, we can see how people have treated others in their networks.

Second, when we have a chance to observe the actions and imprints of takers, we can look for signs of lekking. Self-glorifying images, self-absorbed conversations, and sizable pay gaps can send accurate, reliable signals that someone is a taker.

The transparent network

Now, it's much harder for takers to get away with being fakers, fooling people into thinking they're givers. On the Internet, we can now track down reputational information about our contacts by accessing public databases and discovering shared connections. And we no longer need a company's annual report to catch a taker, because lekking in its many sizes and forms abounds in social network profiles. Tiny cues like words and photos can reveal profound clues about us.

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is a powerful norm, but it comes with two downsides, both of which contribute to the cautiousness with which many of us approach networking. The first downside is that people on the receiving end often feel like they're being manipulated. Do you really care about helping me, or are you just trying to create quid pro quo so that you can ask for a favor?

There's a second downside of reciprocity, and it's one to which matchers are especially vulnerable. Many matchers operate based on the attitude of "I'll do something for you, if you'll do something for me," so they limit themselves to deals in which their immediate benefit is at least as great as the benefits for others . . . If you insist on a quid pro quo every time you help others, you will have a much narrower network.

WEAK TIES

Weak ties are our acquaintances, the people we know casually.

Testing the common assumption that we get the most help from our strong ties. But surprisingly, people are significantly more likely to benefit from weak ties.

Strong ties provide bonds, but weak ties serve as bridges: they provide more efficient access to new information. Our strong ties tend to travel in the same social circles and know about the same opportunities as we do. Weak ties are more likely to open up access to a different network, facilitating the discovery of original leads.

Reconnecting

It's tough to ask weak ties for help. Although they're the faster route to new leads, we don't always feel comfortable reaching out to them. The lack of mutual trust between acquaintances creates a psychological barrier. But it's possible to get the

best of both worlds: the trust of strong ties coupled with the novel information of weak ties. The key is reconnecting, and it's a major reason why givers succeed in the long run.

Sometimes, helping someone out 5 years ago, for no benefit of your own, can justify you emailing them down the track when you need help. You can't predict these occurrences but they happen all the time. What goes around comes around. These karmic moments can often be traced to the fact that matchers are on a mission to make them happen. Just as matchers will sacrifice their own interests to punish takers who act selfishly toward others, they'll go out of their way to reward givers who act generously toward others.

DORMANT TIES

Dormant ties—people you used to see often or know well, but with whom you have since fallen out of contact.

The dormant ties provided more novel information than the current contacts. Over the past few years, while they were out of touch, they had been exposed to new ideas and perspectives. The current contacts were more likely to share the knowledge base and viewpoint that the executives already possessed.

Dormant ties offer the access to novel information that weak ties afford, but without the discomfort. When people reconnect, they still have feelings of trust. Reactivating a dormant tie actually requires a shorter conversation, since there is already some common ground.

THE FIVE MINUTE FAVOUR

In traditional old-school reciprocity, people operated like matchers, trading value back and forth with one another. But today, givers are able to spark a more powerful form of reciprocity. Instead of trading value, aim to add value. You should be willing to do something that will take you five minutes or less for anybody.

FINDING THE DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Spotting and cultivating talent are essential skills in just about every industry; it's difficult to overstate the value of surrounding ourselves with stars. As with networking, when it comes to discovering the potential in others, reciprocity styles

shape our approaches and effectiveness. Givers actually succeed by recognizing potential in others.

The star search

Evidence shows that leaders' beliefs can catalyze self-fulfilling prophecies in many settings.

As in schools, teachers' beliefs create self-fulfilling prophecies. When teachers believe their students are bloomers, they set high expectations for their success. As a result, the teachers engaged in more supportive behaviors that boost the students' confidence and enhances their learning and development.

Managers should be encouraged to recognize the possible power and influence in (a) having a genuine interest and belief in the potential of their employees . . . and (b) engaging in actions that support others and communicate that belief . . . increasing others' motivation and effort and helping them achieve that potential.

Givers, takers and matchers in the star search

Some managers and teachers have already internalized this message. They see people as bloomers naturally, without ever being told. This is rarely the case for takers, who tend to place little trust in other people. Because they assume that most people are takers, they hold relatively low expectations for the potential of their peers and subordinates.

Matchers are better equipped to inspire self-fulfilling prophecies. Because they value reciprocity, when a peer or subordinate demonstrates high potential, matchers respond in kind, going out of their way to support, encourage, and develop their promising colleagues and direct reports. But the matcher's mistake lies in waiting for signs of high potential. Since matchers tend to play it safe, they often wait to offer support until they've seen evidence of promise. Consequently, they miss out on opportunities to develop people who don't show a spark of talent or high potential at first.

Givers don't wait for signs of potential. Because they tend to be trusting and optimistic about other people's intentions, in their roles as leaders, managers, and mentors, givers are inclined to see the potential in everyone. By default, givers start by viewing people as bloomers.

Polish the diamond in the rough

For many years, psychologists believed that in any domain, success depended on talent first and motivation second. To groom world-class athletes and musicians, experts looked for people with the right raw abilities, and then sought to motivate them. But in recent years, psychologists have come to believe that this approach may be backward.

Interest is what drives people to invest their time and energy in developing particular skills and bases of knowledge. Today, we have compelling evidence that interest precedes the development of talent. It turns out that motivation is the reason that people develop talent in the first place.

In roles as leaders and mentors, givers resist the temptation to search for talent first. By recognizing that anyone can be a bloomer, givers focus their attention on motivation.

Throwing good money at bad taken

Because they see potential all around them, givers end up investing a lot of their time in encouraging and developing people to achieve this potential. These investments don't always pay off; some candidates lack the raw talent, and others don't sustain their passion or maintain the requisite level of grit.

Research suggests that due to their susceptibility to ego threat, takers are more vulnerable to escalation of commitment than givers. Because escalating his or her commitment allows the decision maker to keep the prospect of failure hidden, such behavior is personally rational" from the perspective of a taker.

The givers, on the other hand, were primarily concerned about protecting other people and the organization, so they were more willing to admit their initial mistakes and de-escalate their commitment.

Open to advice.

Whereas takers often strive to be the smartest people in the room, givers are more receptive to expertise from others, even if it challenges their own beliefs.

THE POWER OF POWERLESS COMMUNICATION

In *To Sell Is Human*, Daniel Pink argues that our success depends heavily on influence skills. To convince others to buy our products, use our services, accept our ideas, and invest in us, we need to communicate in ways that persuade and motivate. But the best method for influence may not be the one that first comes to mind.

Research suggests that there are two fundamental paths to influence: dominance and prestige. When we establish dominance, we gain influence because others see us as strong, powerful, and authoritative. When we earn prestige, we become influential because others respect and admire us.

Establishing dominance

These two paths to influence are closely tied to our reciprocity styles. Takers are attracted to, and excel in, gaining dominance. In an effort to claim as much value as possible, they strive to be superior to others. To establish dominance, takers specialize in powerful communication by:

- speaking forcefully
- raising voices to assert their authority
- expressing certainty to project confidence
- promoting their accomplishments
- selling with conviction and pride
- displaying strength by spreading their arms in dominant poses
- raising their eyebrows in challenge
- commanding as much physical space as possible

As a result, takers tend to be much more effective in gaining dominance.

In opposition

The opposite of a taker's powerful communication style is called powerless communication. Powerless communicators tend to;

- speak less assertively
- expressing plenty of doubt
- rely heavily on advice from others
- talk in ways that signal vulnerability
- reveal their weaknesses
- make use of disclaimers, hedges, and hesitations

It turns out that takers style doesn't always serve us well, and givers instinctively adopt a powerless communication style that proves surprisingly effective in building prestige.

The value of vulnerability

Takers tend to worry that revealing weaknesses will compromise their dominance and authority. Givers are much more comfortable expressing vulnerability. By making themselves vulnerable, givers can actually build prestige. However, expressing vulnerability is only effective if the audience receives other signals establishing the speaker's competence.

Selling

To effectively influence people, we need to convert the respect that we earn into a reason for our audiences to change their attitudes and behaviors.

Asking questions of your audience and customers is key. It's the givers, by virtue of their interest in getting to know us, who ask us the questions that enable us to experience the joy of learning from ourselves. And by giving us the floor, givers are actually learning about us and from us, which helps them figure out how to sell us things we already value. "By asking questions givers build trust and gain knowledge about their customers' needs. Over time, this makes them better and better at selling.

Persuading - tentative talk

Takers tend to use powerful speech: they're assertive and direct. Givers tend to use more powerless speech, talking with tentative markers like these:

- Hesitations: "well," "um," "uh," "you know"
- Hedges: "kinda," "sorta," "maybe," "probably," "I think"
- Disclaimers: "this may be a bad idea, but"
- Tag questions: "that's interesting, isn't it?" or "that's a good idea, right?"
- Intensifiers: "really," "very," "quite"

These markers send a clear message to the audience: the speaker lacks confidence and authority. Lacking confidence is a bad thing, right?

By talking tentatively, you show a willingness to take on your audiences point of view where required or at least take their opinion into consideration.

Talking tentatively doesn't establish dominance, but it earns plenty of prestige. To a taker, this receptivity to advice may sound like a weakness. By listening to other people's suggestions, givers might end up being unduly influenced by their colleagues. But what if seeking advice is actually a strategy for influencing other people? When givers sit down at the bargaining table, they benefit from advice in unexpected ways.

Negotiating

Seeking advice is among the most effective ways to influence peers, superiors, and subordinates. Advice seeking tends to be significantly more persuasive than the taker's preferred tactics of pressuring subordinates and ingratiating superiors. Advice seeking is also consistently more influential than the matcher's default approach of trading favors.

Advice seeking is a form of powerless communication that combines expressing vulnerability, asking questions, and talking tentatively. When we ask others for advice, we're posing a question that conveys uncertainty and makes us vulnerable. As a result, takers and matchers tend to shy away from advice seeking.

MOTIVATION MAINTENANCE

Successful givers, it turns out, are just as ambitious as takers and matchers. There are two types of givers, and they have dramatically different success rates.

- Selfless givers are people with high other-interest and low self-interest. They give their time and energy without regard for their own needs, and they pay a price for it.
- Successful givers are *otherish*: they care about benefiting others, but they also have ambitious goals for advancing their own interests.

Being otherish means being willing to give more than you receive, but still keeping your own interests in sight, using them as a guide for choosing when, where, how, and to whom you give.

OVERCOMING THE DOORMAT EFFECT

As a giver, you need to recognize that some people operated like takers: they're so self-focused that they will take what they can and move on. Be systematic in how you help other people:

1. Pay more attention to who is asking
2. Pay attention to how they treat you
3. Make a list of reasons to say no.

Once givers start to use their skills in sincerity screening to identify potential takers, they know when to put up their guard. But sometimes, this awareness sets in too late: givers have already become loyal to a taker.

Tit for tat

Generous tit for tat is an otherish strategy. Whereas selfless givers make the mistake of trusting others all the time, otherish givers start out with trust as the default assumption, but they're willing to adjust their reciprocity styles in exchanges with someone who appears to be a taker by action or reputation.

Being otherish means that givers keep their own interests in the rearview mirror, taking care to trust but verify. When dealing with takers, shifting into matcher mode is a self-protective strategy. But one out of every three times, it may be wise to shift back into giver mode, granting so-called takers the opportunity to redeem themselves.

THE SCROOGE SHIFT

What drives people to join a group with the intention of taking, but then end up giving?

The answer to this question opens up another way that givers avoid the bottom of the success ladder. When dealing with individuals, it's sensible for givers to protect themselves by engaging in sincerity screening and acting primarily like matchers in exchanges with takers. But in group settings, there's a different way for givers to make sure that they're not being exploited: get everyone in the group to act more like givers.

If a group develops a norm of giving, members will uphold the norm and give, even if they're more inclined to be takers or matchers elsewhere. This reduces the risks of giving: when everyone contributes, the pie is larger, and givers are no longer stuck contributing far more than they get. But what is it about groups that can tilt members in the giver direction?

Community and likenesses

People are motivated to give to others when they identify as part of a common community.

“It appears that similarity to the self adds a bit of grease to the attraction process: people are just a bit more enthusiastic, friendly, and open-minded when they meet someone who reminds them of themselves.

On the one hand, we want to fit in: we strive for connection, cohesiveness, community, belonging, inclusion, and affiliation with others. On the other hand, we want to stand out: we search for uniqueness, differentiation, and individuality.

The more strongly we affiliate with a group, the greater our risk of losing our sense of uniqueness. The more we work to distinguish ourselves from others, the greater our risk of losing our sense of belongingness.

The principle of optimal distinctiveness: we look for ways to fit in and stand out. A popular way to achieve optimal distinctiveness is to join a unique group. Being part of a group with shared interests, identities, goals, values, skills, characteristics, or experiences gives us a sense of connection and belonging. At the same time, being part of a group that is clearly distinct from other groups gives us a sense of uniqueness.

Underestimating

We have social norms against sounding too charitable,” such that “we call people who go around acting too charitable ‘bleeding hearts,’ ‘do-gooders.’ This is what happens in many businesses and universities: plenty of people hold giver values, but suppress or disguise them under the mistaken assumption that their peers don’t share these values. If many

people personally believe in giving, but assume that others don't, the whole norm in a group or a company can shift away from giving.

The reciprocity ring

The Reciprocity Ring is designed to disrupt this self-fulfilling prophecy. The first step is to make sure that people ask for help. Research shows that at work, the vast majority of giving that occurs between people is in response to direct requests for help.

In the Reciprocity Ring, because everyone is making a request, there's little reason to be embarrassed. By making requests explicit and specific, participants provide potential givers with clear direction about how to contribute effectively.

Because people often present meaningful requests in Reciprocity Rings, many matchers are drawn in by empathy.

But what about the takers? Many audiences are concerned that takers will capitalize on the opportunity to get help without contributing in return. The Reciprocity Ring created a context that encouraged takers to act like givers, and the key lies in making giving public. Takers know that in a public setting, they'll gain reputational benefits for being generous in sharing their knowledge, resources, and connections. If they don't contribute, they look stingy and selfish, and they won't get much help with their own requests.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

You might be underestimating the success of givers. It's true that some people who consistently help others without expecting anything in return are the ones who fall to the bottom. But this same orientation toward giving, with a few adjustments, can also enable people to rise to the top. Focus attention and energy on making a difference in the lives of others, and success might follow as a by-product.

Although many of us hold strong giver values, we're often reluctant to express them at work. But the growth of teamwork, service jobs, and social media has opened up new opportunities for givers to develop relationships and reputations that accelerate and amplify their success.

Defining success

In the mind of a giver, the definition of success itself takes on a distinctive meaning. Whereas takers view success as attaining results that are superior to others' and matchers see success in terms of balancing individual accomplishments with fairness to others.

Givers are inclined to characterize success as individual achievements that have a positive impact on others. Taking this definition of success seriously might require dramatic changes in the way that organizations hire, evaluate, reward, and promote people. It would mean paying attention not only to the productivity of individual people but also to the ripple effects of this productivity on others. If success required benefiting others, it's possible that takers and matchers would be more inclined to find otherish ways to advance personal and collective interests simultaneously.

This is what I find most magnetic about successful givers: they get to the top without cutting others down, finding ways of expanding the pie that benefit themselves and the people around them.

Take action

We spend the majority of our waking hours at work. This means that what we do at work becomes a fundamental part of who we are. If we reserve giver values for our personal lives, what will be missing in our professional lives? By shifting ever so slightly in the giver direction, we might find our waking hours marked by greater success, richer meaning, and more lasting impact.